

December 2010

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Gator Times



2010
Holiday
Party:

Hypnotic Fun!

USS NASSAU (LHA 4) — THE NAVY'S "TOP GATOR"

Gator Times

LHA 4

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GatorTimes

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On The Cover:
A03 Shadrin Rembert dances with his
"resuscitated" apple during the hypnosis
demonstration performed at the 2010
Command Holiday Party at Waterside Marriott
Hotel in downtown Norfolk, Dec. 15.
Photo illustration by MC2 Kristan Robertson



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Captain's Call

Capt. Samuel Norton
Commanding Officer
USS Nassau (LHA 4)



Greetings shipmates,

First of all, I would like to thank everyone, shipmates and their friends and families, for coming out to the Holiday Party Dec. 15. Everyone stayed safe, enjoyed good times and shared holiday cheer. The Richmond Navy League's generosity and kindness never goes unnoticed, so I especially thank them for contributing to the prizes to our holiday celebration.

Next on the agenda is rest and relaxation over the holidays. Take this opportunity during the holiday leave period to recharge your batteries and to spend time with your friends and families. Remember to stay safe. No matter where you go or how you go about it, make a plan and follow through. Whether

it's driving safety, electrical safety or winter activities, make sure you are careful so that you make it back to the "Top Gator" safe and sound.

During and after the holiday leave period, we will continue the preparations for the decommissioning scheduled on March 31, 2011. We must work efficiently during this time and do it right the first time. It is a long and tedious process and coupled with the winter weather it will be a challenge, but I know you all will get everything done right and in a timely manner.

Until next time Nassau, Happy Holidays and stay safe.

CMC Corner

ITCM(SW/AW) Jeffery Barlow



Shipmates,

Let me start off by saying what a great success the 2010 Command Holiday Party was. The entire evening was joyful with the crew looking their best and conducting ourselves in a professional manner. The hypnotist was a different twist for a Holiday party and it was the first time that I've seen such a performance. The volunteers proved to be entertaining and I applaud them for being good sports. I hope everyone enjoyed themselves.

On Jan. 11, all hands will return from leave and we will be well into the decommissioning process. At that time, most operations including working, eating and living will be shifted to the Barge. It will be a change of pace, so it is important to maintain focus and move forward to take USS Nassau out of service.

Also, keep in mind that some Sailors will move overseas, some across the country and others will stay right here in the local Hampton Roads area. Either way, it can be a stressful time if there is not proper planning. There are resources at the Navy Family Housing Office, www.housing.navy.mil, and also the

Fleet Family Service Center, which can be found at www.cnic.navy.mil (under "What We Do" as "Family Readiness", then select "Fleet and Family Support Program" from left menu) to help with a smooth transition from Nassau to the next duty station.

Until then, enjoy your holiday and make it back safely if you are traveling. I will see you about the deck plates!



What's up around Nassau...



Commanding Officer Capt. Samuel Norton performs a reenlistment ceremony for ITCM(SW/AW) Jeffery Barlow on Dec. 2.
Photo by MCSN Ian Carver



USS Nassau Sailors stand in formation for a frocking ceremony held Dec. 10 in the Hangar Bay.
Photo by MC2 Kristan Robertson



ICFN Reginald James carries an empty 55 gallon drum that will be used for waste from Engineering department during decommission.
Photo by MC1(SW) James Stilipec



IT1(SW/AW) Reva Stout accepts an MP3 player she won in a raffle during the holiday party from ABCM(AW/SW) Amos Harvey, event emcee.
Photo by MC3(SW) Christopher Williamson



The 2010 Command Holiday Party, held at the Waterside Marriott Hotel in downtown Norfolk, Va. was highlighted with a hypnosis demonstration on crew members and guests. Volunteers were made to think they were in their underwear (left) and AO3 Shadrian Rembert performed resuscitation on an apple (above) in addition to other entertaining activities.
Photos by MC3(SW) Christopher Williamson



Nassau Sailors arrange toy drive

Story by MC3(SW) Chris Williamson, USS Nassau Public Affairs

USS Nassau Sailors made a delivery to the Toys for Tots Toy Center on Dec. 10 for deprived children in the Hampton Roads area.

Boatswain's Mate 2nd Class (SW/AW) Enrique Aparicio and BM2(SW) Christopher Briggs were in charge of the program aboard Nassau. The crew donated more than 300 toys from Dec. 2 – Dec. 10.

Toys for Tots is a nonprofit organization that, according to their website, specializes in delivering toys to less fortunate children to send a message of hope and to unite communities in a common cause every year.

Briggs and Aparicio heard about the charity program while listening to the Z104 radio station on their way to work.

"We heard about the program on the radio and we both thought that it would be a great idea," said Aparicio. "Since Nassau is decommissioning, this toy drive was one of Nassau's last opportunities to do something great for the community."

Briggs and Aparicio stopped by the radio station to deliver Holiday Party invitations to the two morning radio hosts, Nick Taylor and Tricia Felicia, and to show how many toys Nassau donated.

The ship brought in all sorts of toys, ranging from dolls and footballs to bicycles and water guns. The Fleet and Family Readiness Group also donated to the charity by providing \$550 for the ship to purchase toys.



BM2(SW/AW) Christopher Briggs delivers a giant box full of toys to the Toys for Tots Toy Center in support of the Toys for Tots holiday donation program held aboard USS Nassau (LHA 4).

"My wife and I went out and bought toys with the money that they donated," said Briggs. "Even though we were able to purchase around 75 toys, the crew still did most of the donating. Everyone on board did their best to contribute."

"This toy drive was one of Nassau's last opportunities to do something great for the community."

- BM2(SW/AW) Enrique Aparicio

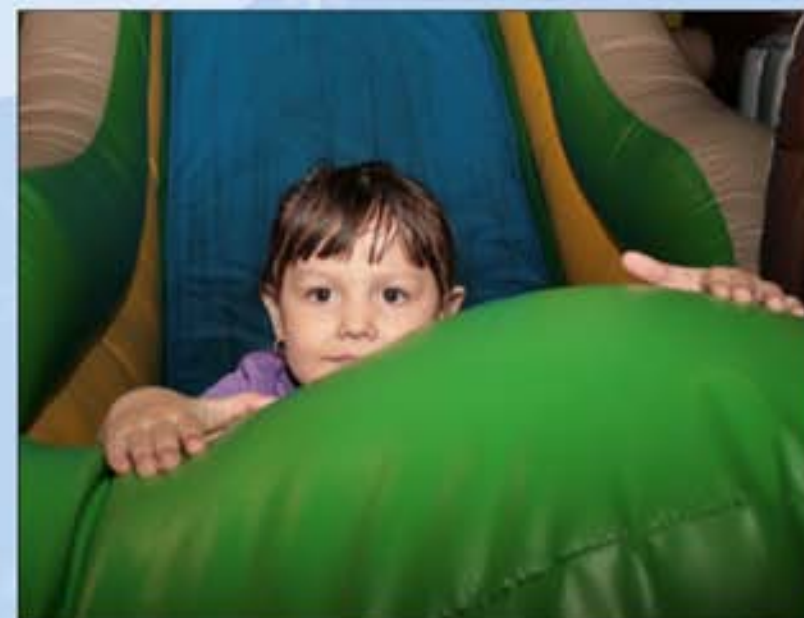
Aparicio also felt that the crew did an amazing job with such a short amount of time and that their donations will be appreciated to the fullest extent by children in the area.

"We met our goal by filling both of the large boxes with toys we set up in the Upper Vehicle Storage," said Aparicio. "Nassau's overwhelming generosity should help bring hundreds of children happiness this Christmas."



The USS Nassau 2010 Children's Holiday Party was held Dec. 10 at The Bounce House in Virginia Beach, Va. Children of crew members were invited to play games, enjoy inflatable slides, visit with Santa Claus and even take home special gifts. The successful and last children's holiday party before Nassau's decommission was wrapped up with a raffle for several prizes including two brand new bicycles.

Photos & Layout by MC2 Kristan Robertson



Nassau completes INSURV inspection



ETSN Eric Laplace, with assistance from contractors Chris Maule and Benny Hill, removes a SPS-67 radar from Nassau's island 90 ft. above sea level. After the INSURV inspection it is now possible to begin the decommissioning process and ensure sound electronic equipment is being given to other ships.

**Story & Photo by MCSN(SW/AW) Jonathan Pankau
USS Nassau Public Affairs**

Nassau completed a Board of Inspection and Survey (INSURV) assessment Dec. 2, bringing the ship one step closer to decommissioning.

"Nassau is now the first ship entering inactive reserve status to complete an INSURV assessment," said Lt. Cmdr. Steven Lehee, the ship's maintenance officer and INSURV coordinator. "Previously ships being sold or given to a foreign military were the only ones required to complete an INSURV. This opportunity provided a learning experience for the crew and the inspectors."

Lehee described INSURV as an in depth inspection conducted on Navy ships to give the Chief of Naval Operations an accurate picture of a ship's overall material readiness.

"INSURV provides a snap shot of the ship's condition," said Nassau's Chief Engineer Lt. Cmdr. Greg Benton. "It's similar to taking your car in for a state inspection but on a large ship-wide scale."

INSURV is set up as a series of events to test the capabilities and condition of shipboard equipment. Benton said Nassau's Engineering Department and Command Control Communications Computers Combat and Intelligence (C5I) Department handled the majority of the events, but the Air department also completed a few.

"Each event consists of a series of checks on a piece of equipment, such as the public address system or po-

table water piping," said ICFN (SW/AW) Chris Eaton. "Every check and test has to be done to ensure the equipment is fully functional."

Eaton also said that a discrepancy is not necessarily a bad thing because the inspectors are more interested in the Sailor's ability to identify the discrepancies and fix them as they appear.

Benton added that INSURV is not really something you can pass because the inspectors are there to identify faulty equipment, not hand out passing grades to the maintenance personnel.

"By design INSURV is a negative inspection," said Benton. "The inspectors are there to highlight discrepancies in ship's equipments and you very rarely feel good afterwards. It's hard to say whether it was successful or not."

The crew executed the maintenance exceptionally well according to Benton, though some areas will require some attention.

"The inspectors were very impressed with the crew's ability to self-assess equipment discrepancies," said Lehee. "On many occasions the inspectors didn't have to show Sailors what was wrong with the equipment because the issues had already been documented before INSURV even began."

Now that INSURV is out of the way Benton said the ship is ready to decommission. He added that in the next coming weeks the ship is going to look much different as equipment is taken from Nassau and given to other ships in need.

"We can't skip a beat in preparation for decommissioning," said Fire Controlman 1st Class (SW/AW) Anthony Jones. "Contractors are already drawing out plans to remove two major radar systems from the top of the ship. By December 10, Nassau will look completely different."

Even though INSURV is complete Benton added that it is important not to lose sight of the maintenance plan and continue the hard work that carried the ship through INSURV.

"You can really only receive a satisfactory grade for an INSURV inspection because the inspectors will always discover discrepancies," said Lehee.

"INSURV is a lot easier to swallow if you take the advice the inspectors give and just move forward."

OPS Department prepares for decomm

**Story by MCSN(SW/AW) Jonathan Pankau
USS Nassau Public Affairs**

Nassau is preparing to decommission in three months and the ship's Operations department has begun to close up shop.

Every department on the ship will be responsible for closing spaces. Operations Department has the added responsibility of cannibalizing hundreds of high-tech systems and removing all classified documents from every space on the ship before Nassau is put in inactive reserve status.

Nassau's Special Security Officer Lt. Michael Knoops said cannibalization is the process of taking apart technical systems aboard a decommissioning ship and distributing them to other vessels on the water front. Knoops is heading a team, comprised of a chief and six petty officers, to close out each space Operations Department owns and assist in the cannibalization process. Knoops said his team will take systems such as the Ships Signal Exploitation Equipment Increment E system, or the system that enables Nassau to conduct cryptology operations at sea, and remove it to be used by other ships.

"Other systems, such as Nassau's missile and torpedo defense systems the NIXIE and SLQ-32, will remain on board in a reserve status," said Knoops. "Inservice Engineering Agents (ISEA) will remove the classified components."

The Operations department works closely with Combat Command Control Communications Computers and Intelligence (C5I) Department for the cannibalization process.

"C5I maintains a lot of the equipment that Operations Department uses," said Nassau's Electronic Maintenance Officer Lt. Cmdr. Steve Learo. "Working in tandem with Ops, we are making preparations to cannibalize equipment or place it in inactive reserve status."

Learo described inactive reserve status as tagging out all electrical sources powering the equipment, making sure the equipment is completely powered down, and wrapping it in fire retardant paper.

"Naval Surface Force Atlantic and the ISEAs give us guidance on which systems will remain on-



A crane removes the AN/SPS-48E radar antenna from Nassau's island during decommissioning preparations. Photo by MC1(SW) James Stilipec

board and which ones to cannibalize," said Knoops.

Destruction of NATO classified materials is also required during the decommissioning process.

Knoops specified that classified documents range from top secret material all the way down to a Plan of the Day and no space aboard Nassau will be locked without first doing a clean sweep.

"The main job of Knoop's team will be to certify that the ship is free of classified material," said Knoops. "This entails walking all of the ship's spaces and making sure classified documents are not shoved behind racks, in angle irons, and even under decking or above ceiling tiles. We will destroy anything we find and then I will assure the CO that the space is ready to be closed out."

"Nassau's Joint Intelligence Center maintains more than 30 years of classified documents and they all have to be sorted through and either turned over to another ship or destroyed," said Intelligence Specialist 2nd Class (SW/AW) Kalie Sharpe, security team member that will sweep closed out spaces.

Sharpe also said that once the ship is free of classified material, all of Nassau's spaces will be locked and the ship will be closer to inactive reserve status.

"We have a solid plan for drawing out our manpower and closing out every space on board," said Knoops. "We have made great progress identifying documents and publications that can be removed and have already destroyed hundreds of others. Operations Department is in good shape for decommissioning."

Nassau Sailors get on board 'Snowball Express'

Story & Photo by MCSN Ian Carver, USS Nassau Public Affairs

Sailors from USS Nassau took time during the holidays to give back to families of fallen service members.

Seventeen Nassau Sailors volunteered to visit Norfolk International Airport in support of the "Snowball Express" on Dec. 9.

Snowball Express started in early 2006 as a means of providing hope and new memories to children of military fallen heroes who have died while on active duty since 9/11, according to the program's website.

The families went on an all-expense paid trip to Dallas for a weekend of rodeo, theme parks and a showing of "The Nutcracker."

When each family arrived at the airport, volunteers carried their luggage, followed them to the ticket counter and escorted them through a receiving line of dozens of uniformed service members who waved American flags and cheered them all the way to the gate.

"It was a good feeling to be out there to let somebody know that you care about them," said Ship Servicemen 3rd Class (SW/AW) Victor Nyarko, a

volunteer from USS Nassau. "I realized the families were much appreciative for the fact that we were out there to carry their luggage for them and cheer them as they pass."

"It was a good feeling to... let somebody know that you care about them."

- SH3(SW/AW) Victor Nyarko

Santa Claus greeted the families at the gate and there was cotton candy and coloring for the kids. A man twisted balloons into the shapes of decorated Christmas trees and reindeer.

"It is something special to help fill a lonely time of year for the children," said Carole Hilton of Chesapeake, Va., and mother of three. "The kids get very excited about seeing the friends they have made through the program."

Hilton became involved in the program in 2004 when she learned about it through the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) class.

American Airlines stepped up to be the Official Airline of Snowball Express, donating the aircraft needed for charter purposes. All pilots and flight

attendants donated their time to spend the weekend with the families.

"I think it's great, it gives my son an opportunity to be around kids going through the same experience," said Susanne M. Larson of Newport News, Va., mother of six year old C.J. Larson.

"The program is awesome. It lets kids understand that it's ok to cry, that you're not left behind and we share the experiences together," said Madeline Ober of Virginia Beach, Va. who was making her fifth trip on the Snowball Express.

For more information about Snowball Express visit their Web site at www.snowballexpress.org.

IT1 Amy J. Lockhart looks on as a volunteer shapes balloons for children at Norfolk International Airport as part of the Snowball Express for families of fallen servicemen and women. Fourteen families were flown to Dallas for a weekend of Rodeo, theme



Chaplain's Corner



Chaplain's Corner provided by USS Nassau Command Religious Programs

This holiday season, Sailors aboard Nassau have doubled as Santa's elves to make the holidays more festive for those in need. There are many ways for Nassau families to keep contributing their time and talents, now, and all throughout the year.

The first thing Sailors did was collect and deliver donations for Toys for Tots.

On the morning of Dec. 9th, Nassau Sailors hopped on board the Snowball Express — a trip to the Norfolk International Airport where we saw off Gold Star Families (those who have lost a spouse or parent in the Global War on Terror). The moms and children were center-stage as we (along with Santa and his elves) met and greeted the families through check-in, escorted them through a cheering crowd of Sailors to their gate, and then played games and

otherwise celebrated with them. It was a bitter-sweet time of celebration and fun for all.

Other opportunities to serve abound. Volunteering as a Big Brother or Big Sister to a child who is missing a parent, visiting hospitals, nursing homes, or helping build a Habitat for Humanity House are just a few of the things you and your family can do together. Check your local paper for opportunities to serve and see how the perspective can change on your problems as you brighten the lives of those less fortunate. As you experience the warmth of giving, you'll want to do so all throughout the year, not just during the holidays.

May you find rich blessings in whatever way you serve those in need!

Admin Department workload increases for decom

Story by MCSN Ian Carver, USS Nassau Public Affairs

The workload increases for the Administration department aboard USS Nassau (LHA 4) as the decommissioning date gets closer.

Nassau's decommission date is slated for the end of March 2011, which means personnel transfers and much more for the Admin department.

"The number of people transferring and all the work that comes along with a transfer has been one of the toughest things to keep up with," said Chief Yeoman (YN) Sharell C. Johnson (SW/AW/SCW) the Administration department leading chief petty officer (LCPO).

Transfers, awards, evaluations (evals), and customer service are just a few of the things that will keep the Administration staff working later and later as decom approaches, department working hours will continue to increase as March approaches, said Johnson.

"Our department is working an average of eight plus hours a day and we are expecting our days to

get longer and longer," said YNSA David C. Baxter.

He explained that the decommissioning work load was made all the worse by the loss of two first class petty officers, YN1 Sharon Brandy and Personnel Specialist (PS) 1st Class Rhonda Payne, from the Admin department.

"Having senior leadership available for questions makes the job so much easier, that's why the combined experience of YN1 and PS1 is greatly missed in our department," said Baxter.

Johnson said, in a normal month, the "Top Gator" has around 10 to 15 transfers. For November, there had been around 50 to 60 transfers and that number is expected to double or triple over the next few months.

"To make the transfer process easier for Admin and for Sailors, start talking to your chain of command early about evals and awards," said Johnson. "As soon as you get your orders, start looking at your records to make sure they are up to date."

COMMAND ACHIEVEMENTS



SURFACE



WARFARE

ITSA Adams
AD3 Bautista
BMSN Beaulah
SN Clemons
ITSA Cisneros
AO3 Cook
SN Dannelley
ATAN Denson
FC3 Dunham
EMFN Francis

ADAN Gardner
CSSN Gathings
MMFN Hassinger
IT2 Hernandez
AD3 Kerry
ITSN King
OS2 King
MM2 Knupp
MMFN Mayo
MMFN Nilsson

ITSA Palacios
IT1 Pippolo
IS2 Ruppe
CS2 Roby
CTM2 Schrier
MA3 Spence
AT2 Stough
MM2 Stumph
OS2 Wagner
ITSN Wong

AIR



WARFARE

IT2 Andrade
IT2 Blake
EN2 Brooks
MM2 Brown
ENFA Cusick
EM1 Daus
ADAN Dedrick
GM2 Fletcher
MM1 Freeman
CTR3 Galloway
AD3 Husted

AMAN Jones
IT3 Jones
AC3 Kelly
MM2 Knupp
YNSA Lafrancois
CS2 Lee
IT3 Madrigal
EN1 Morrow
EMFN Nolberto
FN Palmer
MM3 Poyse
ITSN Queen

CS2 Roby
AT3 Rodgers
CTM2 Skyler
EN3 Smith
IT3 Spence
MC1 Stillipce
MRFA Torres
FN Vazquez
ABHAN Wyrock
IT3 Yuasensei
PS3 Zullo

